UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1992/NGO/17
31 January 1992

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH/SPANISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-eighth session
Agenda item 17

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES ON ITS FORTY-THIRD SESSION

Written statement submitted by the Indian Council of South America, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[16 December 1992]

1. The quincentenary of the so-called "Encounter between two worlds" is doubtless an important and incomparable landmark in the colonial history of the Americas, and consequently the subject of deep scrutiny by our indigenous peoples and nations of the Indo-American continent and of the world.

2. In recent years, the Indians, the survivors of the colonial hecatomb, have developed an awareness of their own history, marked by that exceptional human tragedy, and an Indian revival is currently under way. Indigenous organizations are again springing up in all latitudes and ears are being turned to their serene reflections, as well as to their embittered and plaintive voices demanding the right to rebuild their future and claiming their rightful place within the international community.

3. At a time when the countries of Europe, and in particular Spain, are preparing bombastic celebrations of Christopher Columbus' landing in

Indo-America, which marked a colonial invasion without precedent in history, the indigenous peoples, at the "Latin American Meeting of Peasant and Indigenous Organizations" held in Bogotá between 7 and 12 October 1989, at the international conference held in Tromso, Norway from 8 to 12 August 1990 and at other meetings in the Americas in Quito, in Guatemala, etc. held in 1991, decided to commemorate this historic date - 12 October 1992 - as the International Year of Resistance and Struggle of Indigenous Peoples and Nations for their legitimate rights to land and their fundamental freedoms and for recognition of their cultural identity and of their right to a decent life.

4. This resolution, which was prepared and submitted by the "Tupaj Katari" Movement and by the Indian Council of South America (CISA) and approved by the majority of the indigenous delegations in a wide-ranging debate that took place on the fringe of the meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in the Palais des Nations from 22 July to 2 August 1991, adequately summarizes the essential points of the Bogotá Declaration, the Quito resolutions and the final Guatemala Declaration and forcefully gives voice to the legitimate aspiration of indigenous peoples and nations to the right to self-determination.

5. This document, which firmly takes the international community to task over the causes and consequences of the conquest of the Americas 500 years ago, is signed by the following representative indigenous organizations, with and without consultative status:

Four Directions Council, Mikmaq (USA)
Grand Council of the Crees (Canada)
International Indian Treaty Council (USA)
Indian Law Resource Center (USA)
International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development
Inuit Circumpolar Conference
Indian Council of South America (CISA)
Cultural Resources Section (Canada)
Movimiento de Liberación "Tupaj Katari" (Bolivia)
Small Peoples of the North of the Soviet Union
Fundación del Aborigen Argentino (Argentina)
Comisión jurídica de Tahuantinsuyo (Peru)
Consejo de todas las Tierras Mapuche (Chile)
Federación Nativa del Rio Madre de Dios
Federación de Mujeres para la Educación indígena
Organización de Mujeres Aymaras del Collasuyu (Bolivia)
Auto-promoción del Desarrollo Aymara (Bolivia)
Comité Internacional para los Indios de las Américas
Asociación 500 años de Resistencia Amerindio, etc.

RESOLUTION

Considering that the "discovery of the New World" by the Spanish conquistadors - that is, the brutal invasion of the Americas 500 years ago - marked the beginning of a period that is without doubt the darkest and most barbaric in the annals of the indigenous peoples of the western Hemisphere,

Considering that, from the beginning of that fateful day (12 October 1492) which historians describe as an accident of history, the conquest established by force a colonial system on the American continent, and caused the brutal destruction of the aboriginal civilizations (Inca, Maya, Aztec, etc.), the annihilation of their thousand-year-old cultures and ancient traditions, the extermination of entire populations, complete genocide, torture, enslavement, and the daily negation of indigenous values,

Convinced that, contrary to the colonizers' falsified version of history, it is more important than ever to reassert the historical truth that this was not a discovery or an encounter, but rather a confrontation of two worlds, that of the oppressor and of the oppressed, a conflict of two cultures and two irreconcilable civilizations, of two conflicting visions of the universe, of two incompatible systems of values - the Indian being collective, communal, humane, fraternal, peaceful, respectful of Mother Earth and in harmony with the Universe; the European being greedy, individualistic, ambitious, warlike, and destructive of nature in its pursuit of power and profit,

Paying homage to the memory of some 90 million Indians who were exterminated, massacred, and burned alive - and to the survivors who were enslaved yesterday and live in misery today,

Considering that all that we have described truly constituted a crime against humanity,

Deploring the preparations being made, and the means employed by Western Governments, particularly Spain, for the festive celebration of the so-called "encounter of two worlds" or "discovery", which we consider to be an insult to the dignity of indigenous peoples, and a humiliation to those who have survived the colonial catastrophe,

Recalling that states and governments have a moral duty to reflect upon this human tragedy and the crimes perpetuated against civilized and peaceful peoples,

Noting that the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1988/35, encouraged States to ensure that their national celebrations do not perpetuate or justify theories of racial superiority or the subjugation of indigenous or other peoples,

Recognizing that the vitality and forcefulness of the resistance and struggle of indigenous peoples are rooted in their national identity, which is the driving force of their own history, and in the ongoing reaffirmation of the diversity of their cultural and linguistic expressions, as well as their social structures, legal institutions, and philosophy, all of which constitute an integral part of human patrimony,

Reaffirming the necessity of implementing the rights and fundamental freedoms contained in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular the right to live in dignity, the right to land, the rights to peace and to work, and the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples and nations,

Conscious that there will be no justice or peace as long as Indians and peasants deprived of their Mother Earth, surviving in misery and poverty, working in degrading conditions, suffering from racial discrimination and held in contempt and humiliated, which is an embarrassment to Western civilization and a source of permanent conflict for the world,

Recalling that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 45/164, proclaimed 1993 the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, with the aim of supporting the initiatives of indigenous peoples in the fields of human rights, environment, development, health and education,

Welcoming the symbolic act of those Caribbean States (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana) which abstained from voting on General Assembly resolution 45/164 on the grounds that the resolution did not expressly condemn the European invasion of the Americas,

Believing that it is the duty of the United Nations to support fully the struggles of indigenous peoples for dignity, self-determination, and development, using all means at its disposal,

WE, REPRESENTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, HAVE DECIDED TO:

Solemnly proclaim 1992 the International Year of Resistance and Struggle of indigenous peoples for their rights, their dignity, and their fundamental freedoms, with the symbolic date of 12 October;

Demand that the Spanish Government, as well as the Governments of all Western colonial nations, assume the moral and political responsibility for reparations for the negative consequences of the invasion - the genocide, crimes, pillage of gold and silver - and pay indemnity to the descendants of the victimized peoples of the Americas in conformity with international law;

Request the United Nations General Assembly to designate 12 October 1992 for the opening ceremonies for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People;

Declare that the International Year for the World's Indigenous People must mark the beginning of a new era, in which indigenous peoples regain their rightful place in the global community of nations;

Request that the United Nations observe the International Year for the World's Indigenous People in 1993 by devoting its political, financial and technical resources to activities planned and implemented by indigenous peoples themselves, for their own self-determination and self-development;

Ask the international community to accept the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and nations as observers at all sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

Geneva, 2 August 1991